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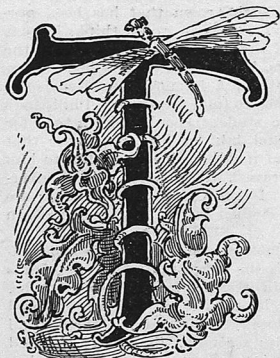
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

HINTS FOR PAINTING CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

BY EMMA HAYWOOD.



THE season for selecting and arranging for the mutual distribution of Christmas and New Year's gifts comes round with alarming rapidity. To those who are able and willing to enhance the value of such gifts by making them the work of their own hands, a few suggestions to guide them in so delightful an occupation may prove acceptable.

I do not propose to treat of large undertakings, but rather of the best and simplest method of preparing some of the many trifles that

help to adorn our homes or add to our personal comfort.

It is often a vexed question with regard to trifles suitable for presenting to the sterner sex, who will probably value some little gift, which has occupied the time, thought and skill of their fair relatives and friends far more than expensive presents which lack this tender charm.

Most gentlemen are possessed of many photographs of various sizes and shapes which would be much improved by framing, and so framed adorn their apartments. Now here is a wide field for the exercise of ingenuity in elaborating designs artistic and useful.

Frames made of two thicknesses of stiff cardboard each covered with silk, satin or some other textile fabric, and then sewn or pasted neatly together, leaving an aperture at the bottom to slip in the photograph, are inexpensive and pretty foundations to work upon; they should, of course, be decorated with a spray of flowers, birds, butterflies, or anything else that individual fancy may suggest. If to be used for a single frame, a support made from a narrow slip of cardboard fastened on three parts of the way up the back and likewise covered to match the body of the frame is necessary.

But the prettiest way to make up these frames is by fastening two, three or four together as the case may be, so that they simulate the form of a folding screen. This plan is particularly successful when used for the long, narrow photographs that take full-length portraits.

The designs painted on these screen frames can be carried right through the number of panels required or each panel can be decorated separately according to taste.

Any color that fancy may suggest can be employed, and if not desirous of decorating with hand painting, then a pretty soft figured silk can be employed; but in this case it is an improvement to make one corner in each panel of silk gathered fan-shape. These silk frames are a novelty and have quite superseded those made of plush. Another plan for utilizing this kind of mounting for photographs is to increase the number of panels so as to make a folding book, and for this when closed a case should be made to match, of cardboard, covered with silk; on the outside of the case a monogram can be painted or embroidered. The photographs must be slipped in back to back, so that each aperture holds two, one facing each way. For the screens they are more often backed with silk so that each aperture contains only one photograph.

Another pretty and useful present consists of a pair of perfume bottles with cut glass stoppers. The bottles should be of a good size. Cover the body of the bottle quite plainly with a rich dark silk of good quality, taking care that the join shows as little as possible. Make two or three gaugings at the neck of the bottle and draw them in so that from the shoulder to the neck of the bottle the silk is full. Above the gaugings leave a margin beyond the rim and fringe it out so that the stopper appears to be embedded in it. A ribbon bow may be added but is not necessary. Now decorate either the front only or all four sides of the bottle with hand painting. These look really handsome when finished if the bottles are of a size to hold about half a pint.

China painting is eminently suited for gifts, it can be made so dainty and simple for those who have not much time at their disposal. For elaborate work nothing can be better than decoration in the royal Worcester style with raised gold; the jeweled work like the modern Worcester is also very choice. The vases in Belleek ware which is best for royal Worcester are made in such exquisite shapes that the most fastidious taste cannot fail to be satisfied. The French china comes next in price and is

most suited for all kinds of dinner, fruit and tea sets, also bon-bon boxes, toilet sets and plaques of various kinds.

The ivory white ware is cheapest of all, and really for elegance of design in vases and pitchers especially, it rivals the Belleek ware.

The recent craze for royal Worcester decorations has caused quite a little spurt in china painting, but aspirants for this truly beautiful work who are anxious for a few lessons must be careful to go where they are sure of getting the right kind of instruction, for some would be teachers, eager to go with the times, make profession of teaching this particular style with really the very haziest notions on the subject. This want of conscientious consideration for the pockets of pupils, many of whom can ill afford to waste their money, is a crying evil, but one difficult to combat.

Tinting on all kinds of fabrics combined with embroidery is quickly done and very effective. For cushions, foot-stools, bed spreads and anything requiring a heavy texture, Bolton sheeting is as good a material as any and very cheap. It is of a soft, creamy white and takes the tapestry dyes well for tinting. Get your designs stamped; this will cost only a few cents, and is much better than tracing it yourself, as the stamped outline helps to prevent the colors running; besides, the semi-conventional designs, which alone look well treated in the manner I am speaking of, require great accuracy.

To tint this material, take a bristle brush, such as is used for oil painting.

It is a good plan before beginning to tint to buy the shades you intend to use either in flax thread or silks—which can now be obtained in the most beautiful artistic colorings—then mix the dyes on a white palette, and match the embroidery silks exactly. The dyes will in most cases require considerable dilution with water.

Do not commence to tint at the edges when your brush is full, but start in the middle of a form and carry the color to the edges gradually. You must drive the color well in as it looks poor just laid on the surface. Do not attempt much shading, except by means of flat tints in the different forms. It is labor wasted to shade each separate form.

Several styles of embroidery can be applied in carrying out this kind of work, the simplest consists of mere outlining, which is sufficiently effective. This outlining can be done in Japanese gold cord if preferred and the colored silks dispensed with.

The flax thread above mentioned is much cheaper than silks, but so like silk as to be scarcely distinguishable; the colorings are equally good.

The tinted design can be enriched with embroidery to any extent. Fashions made in this way are generally backed with a good material, such as plush or brocade; when well done and finished in this way they fetch a very high price at the stores.

Tinting and outlining on scrim bolting cloth or thin silk for tidies, easel scarves and draperies of all kinds is very charming and highly effective work. For table scarves, d'oyleys, pin cushions, etc., silk or satin can be employed and looks very handsome treated in this way.

For a full description of different methods for painting on textile fabrics, which would take up too much space to repeat here, I will refer my readers to the February and March numbers, 1888, of this magazine, where they will find an article of mine in two chapters devoted to the subject. They will there learn amongst other things the manner of tinting on the thin materials I have mentioned.

I cannot help here calling attention to the truly charming decorative panel by E. Schulz, in the last issue of the DECORATOR AND FURNISHER. In addition to its intrinsic merit the reproduction is so in every way excellent and clear that it would be extremely easy to enlarge if need be.

The subject represents two dear little winged cherubs whispering together and seated on a branch of blossoms; birds, butterflies, and many-hued flowers complete the graceful picture. I hope the editor will give us many more such useful and artistic decorative studies. They can be applied in so many ways with the exercise of a little ingenuity. For instance, what a dainty cover for a blotting book such a design would make, painted either in colors or monochrome on wood, canvas, silk, satin, bolting cloth, or celluloid. Then what a pretty motif for a Christmas card. For larger work it is eminently suited for tapestry painting for a wall hanging or screen, and doubtless individual need might suggest many more uses for such charming illustrations.

TO REMEDY DAMP WALLS.—Take three quarters of a pound of mottled soap to one gallon of water. Lay this composition over the brickwork steadily and carefully with a large flat brush, so as not to raise a lather. This wash must remain 24 hours, to become dry. Then mix half-a-pound of alum with four gallons of water, and leave for 24 hours, after which apply it in the same manner over the soap, selecting dry fine weather for the work.